

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

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ACTION: ARA-00

9167
12/7/82

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 6895

CINCSO FOR INTAFF, CINCLANT FOR POLAD

EQ 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PORS, PROP, AR
SUBJECT: VIOLENT OPPOSITION TO THE POLITICAL OPENING

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6525 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: ARGENTINA EXPERIENCED INTENSE POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM IN THE EARLY AND MID-1970S. FROM 1979-82 VIOLENCE VIRTUALLY ENDED, AFTER THE SECURITY FORCES DEFEATED THE MONTONEROS AND THE ERP IN THE "DIRTY WAR". DURING THE LAST FEW MONTHS, AS A RESULT OF THE PROMISE OF A RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OF INCREASED TOLERANCE OF DISSENT AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THE HEATED POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HAS AGGRAVATED POLARIZATION AND PERHAPS EMBOLDENED CLANDESTINE GROUPS, WHO OPPOSE THE POLITICAL OPENING. ACTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE ARE STILL INFREQUENT AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO DEATHS IN INCIDENTS TO DATE, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL BOMBINGS IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS AND ONE INSTANCE OF AN APPARENT TERRORIST ATTACK. NONE APPEARS TO BE THE WORK OF LEFT-WING GROUPS, WHICH WE THINK ARE DISORGANIZED AND INFILTRATED. RATHER, WE SUSPECT THAT SOME OF THESE MAY BE THE WORK OF ELEMENTS LINKED TO THE SECURITY FORCES, WHO WANT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT A RETURN OF SIGNIFICANT TERRORISM IS LIKELY. SOME ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT APPEAR TO BE FOSTERING THIS LINE OF THINKING. SOME EVENTS MAY ALSO REFLECT THE INTENSE STRUGGLE WITHIN SOME OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND UNION ORGANIZATIONS.

2. (U) THE FOLLOWING IS A CHRONOLOGY OF RECENT INCIDENTS WHICH APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN TERRORISTIC IN NATURE:

A. ON OCTOBER 6, A BOMB EXPLODED NEAR RIVADAVIA SQUARE IN BUENOS AIRES DAMAGING PROPERTY IN THE AREA BUT CAUSING NO INJURIES.

B. ON OCTOBER 22, A BOMB EXPLODED AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE TWO MAIN STREETS IN THE WEALTHY BARRIO NORTE, ONE OF THE BEST-GUARDED AREAS OF BUENOS AIRES, WOUNDING TWO Bystanders.

C. ON NOVEMBER 5, CGT-AZOPARDO (GENERAL LABOR CONFEDERATION HEADQUARTERED ON AZOPARDO STREET) SECRETARY GENERAL JORGE TRIACCA'S HOME WAS SPRAYED WITH MACHINE GUN FIRE AT 6:00 A.M. BY UNKNOWN PERSONS FROM AT LEAST TWO CARS. OVER 100 SHOTS WERE FIRED. NO ONE WAS HURT. TRIACCA SAID THAT THE ATTACK WAS "AN ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THE GOAL THE NATION HAS SET FOR ITSELF: INSTITUTIONALIZATION (RETURN TO DEMOCRACY THROUGH ELECTIONS)".

D. ON NOVEMBER 9, A HIGHLY-EXPLOSIVE DEVICE EXPLODED IN THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES CHURCH OF COMODORO RIVADAVIA (A COASTAL CITY IN CHUBUT PROVINCE, ABOUT 1,300 MILES SOUTHWEST OF BUENOS AIRES). THE EXPLOSION PARTIALLY DAMAGED THE CHURCH, AND DID NOT CAUSE ANY CASUALTIES ONLY BECAUSE IT OCCURRED JUST A FEW MINUTES AFTER SOME 30 MEMBERS OF THE

CONGREGATION HAD LEFT A SERVICE. BOMB SQUAD SPOKESMEN SAID THAT THE DEVICE WAS "A HOMEMADE BOMB OF THE TYPE USED BY TERRORISTS."

E. ON NOVEMBER 11, A POWERFUL BOMB DESTROYED PART OF THE STEPS OF THE LA PLATA STUDENTS SOCCER STADIUM, WHERE FOLK SINGER MERCEDES SOSA WAS TO PERFORM THE NEXT DAY. (LA PLATA IS A COASTAL CITY ABOUT 50 MILES SOUTHEAST OF BUENOS AIRES.) THE EXPLOSION SHATTERED WINDOWPANE OF NEARBY BUILDINGS IN A LARGE AREA. SOSA IS A WELL-KNOWN MARXIST WHO MAY ALSO BE A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF ARGENTINA (SHE HAS NEVER PUBLICLY CONFIRMED OR DENIED THE CHARGE). SHE HAD LIVED IN EXILE FOR YEARS UNTIL ALLOWED TO RETURN IN 1982. BEFORE THE LA PLATA PERFORMANCE, SHE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM SPAIN, WHERE SHE REPORTEDLY SANG TO HELP THE CAMPAIGN OF THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY DURING THE OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTIONS.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release (☐) Excise (☐) Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: (☐) In Part (☒) In Full

(☐) Classify as (☐) Extend as (☐) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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3. STATEMENTS IN RECENT WEEKS BY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE MILITARY AND PERSONS SYMPATHETIC TO THEM APPEAR TO BE AIMED AT SPREADING THE IMPRESSION THAT ARGENTINA IS ON THE VERGE OF A RETURN TO VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM OF THE PAST. FOR EXAMPLE, ON NOVEMBER 13, FORMER ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF (1975) LEANDRO ANAYA TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE BELIEVED LEFT-WING TERRORISM WAS GOING TO RETURN TO ARGENTINA (SEE REFTEL). SUBSEQUENTLY, NAVY-LINING B.A. DAILY "CONVICCION" ECHOED ANAYA'S WORDS. ON NOVEMBER 16, THE ARMY'S CHIEF OF STAFF, GENERAL CALVI, SAID SUBVERSION WAS "ATTEMPTING TO PENETRATE THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENTS TO SAP THE POWER OF THE STATE, TRYING TO REACH THAT POWER THROUGH CHAOS AND TERROR". (GENERAL CALVI ASSERTED TO THE AMBASSADOR IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION THAT "TERRORISTS" ARE INFILTRATING BOTH THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE LABOR UNIONS. HIS PREDECESSOR, GENERAL (R) VAQUERO, SAID PRIVATELY THAT HE PARTICULARLY FEARS INFILTRATION OF RAUL ALFONSIN'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN BY YOUNG LEFTIST EXTREMISTS). CALVI ALSO ACCUSED HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS OF FINANCING "STATEMENTS AND TRIPS BY MOTHERS OF TERRORISTS," IN AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO. FINALLY, ON NOVEMBER 18, STATE-RUN TELEVISION HAD SHORT SPOTS SHOWING TERRORISM OF THE PAST, WITH A MAN INTONING THAT "INTERNATIONAL GROUPS" WERE TRYING TO BRING TERRORISM BACK. IN PRIVATE SOCIAL GATHERINGS, THE SPOUSES OF SEVERAL MISSION OFFICERS HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THEIR ARGENTINE INTERLOCUTORS, THE WIVES OF MILITARY OFFICERS, THAT THEYSARE EXPECTING A REGRESSION TO SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF TERRORISM IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE.

4. COMMENT: SOME PEOPLE IN THE GOA AND MILITARY APPEAR TO WANT TO MAKE PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT A RETURN OF TERRORISM IS UNDERWAY. APART FROM THE ABOVE CHRONOLOGY, WE HAVE BEEN HEARING THIS THEME FROM THE ARGENTINE DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY AND POLICE ESTABLISHMENTS. WE SUSPECT THE PURPOSE IN FACT IS TO CONVINCE THE POLITICIANS THAT THE THREAT OF A COUP BY "LAW AND ORDER" AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS IN THE MILITARY IS REAL AND THAT THE POLITICIANS WOULD BE WISE TO NOT STRENGTHEN SUCH FORCES. THE BEST WAY TO ACCOPLISH THAT, THE ARGUMENT GOES, WOULD BE TO AGREE TO THE "CONCERTACION" PROPOSED BY THE JUNTA (BUENOS AIRES 6526 NOTAL). THAT THIS GAME MAY BE UNDERWAY DOES NOT MEAN, OF COURSE, THAT THERE IS NO GENUINE CONCERN AMONG THE MILITARY -- AND AMONG MANY OTHERS -- OVER THE POSSIBILITY, HOWEVER REMOTE, THAT THE DARK DAYS OF 1973-79 COULD RETURN TO ARGENTINA. SHLAUDEMAN